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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

Ministerial round tables: good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition

Chairs' summary

1. On 12 March 2018, the Commission on the Status of Women held two ministerial round tables on the topic "Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition", under the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". The participants in the round tables exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on actions taken by Governments to ensure that rural women and girls have access to affordable, quality education, essential infrastructure and technology, including sustainable energy and information and communication technology, and adequate, quality food and nutrition.

2. The Minister of Culture of Estonia, Indrek Saar, chaired the first round table and made introductory comments. Ministers and high-level government officials from 21 Member States participated in the first round table. The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya, Margaret Kobia, chaired the second round table and made introductory comments. Ministers and high-level government officials from 17 Member States participated in the second round table.

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Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Yannick Glemarec made closing comments.

Measures to ensure access to and completion of education by rural women and girls

3. In their interventions, participants shared their experiences, lessons learned and good practices on successful policies and programmes to increase access by rural women and girls to education. Participants called for increasing budgetary allocations to build new schools and rehabilitate old ones in rural areas in order to increase the access of women and girls to educational and training opportunities. Scholarships, school feeding and transportation programmes were highlighted as successful measures to encourage more women and girls living in rural areas to attend school and to reduce school dropout rates. A major concern was the lack of concrete action to address early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Participants called for more national dialogues and campaigns to facilitate changes in attitudes towards access by girls to education, especially in male-dominated science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

4. Participants emphasized the importance of improving the quality of education for women and girls in rural areas. Measures towards that end included providing a safe learning environment for women and girls, improving sanitation in schools, providing free sanitary pads, leveraging technology, and reforming and improving teacher training. Participants noted that such measures also increased learning opportunities and outcomes for rural women and girls in a changing world. The introduction of financial incentives such as free housing and salary bonuses was presented as a means to attract good teachers to remote rural villages.

Investments to ensure essential infrastructure for the benefit of rural women and girls

5. Participants drew attention to the importance of promoting and developing sustainable energy, water and sanitation, transportation, information and communications technology, education and health infrastructure to accelerate progress on poverty reduction and enhance access by rural women and girls to basic services. Increased investment in rural roads enhanced the ability of women to travel and perform activities related to household production and income generation. Participants emphasized the need to increase investment in electricity grids, water and sanitation infrastructure, and time- and labour-saving technologies, to alleviate the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls in rural areas.

6. Participants expressed concern about the significant challenges caused by climate change and called for urgent action to mitigate the negative impact of extreme weather patterns and build the resilience of rural communities. Participants discussed the critical need to increase investment in maintaining and upgrading rural roads and bridges in order to improve access by rural women and girls to services, including health-care services. Participants also stressed improving school infrastructure, including by increasing access to electricity, information and communications technology, and water and sanitation, as crucial for the well-being of rural girls and young women in the learning environment.

Information and communications technology and other technology for rural women and girls

7. Participants emphasized that access to information and communications technology and other technology was a key tool for empowering women and girls in rural areas and achieving sustainable development. They described a wide range of programmes tailored to schools, families, community centres and women's centres, including in rural, poor and indigenous communities and areas. Digital inclusion was being addressed through advances in infrastructure for information and communications technology, including high-coverage broadband services, mobile phones and mobile hotspots. The need for widespread access to computers, by ensuring one laptop or tablet for every child, was stressed. Participants noted that, in educational systems, early access to information and communications technology, skills development, and information and communications technology centres in secondary schools could bridge the digital divides between rural and urban areas and between girls and boys.

8. Participants drew attention to projects focused on marginalized families and communities where access by women to information and communications technology was facilitated through women's and community centres, with positive effects on the empowerment of women. Participants referred to mobile banking and online information portals for the start-up of businesses and for business development planning as tools that could improve financial security and entrepreneurship among women. Participants viewed the use of information and communications technology and other technology as enabling easier access to public services and better service delivery in rural areas, including health care and real-time support for women and girl victims of violence.

Policies to ensure access by rural women and girls to food and nutrition

9. Participants highlighted land ownership and rights, as well as access to financial services, agricultural inputs and processing, and information on markets and business development, as key for increasing the agricultural productivity of rural women and ensuring food security. Speakers noted that an integrated approach to addressing poverty and ensuring adequate nutrition for children would incorporate universal school attendance and school canteen meals for children on a permanent basis at the primary and secondary levels. Participants drew attention to projects connecting women's ownership of resources and control over agricultural processes with efforts to protect the environment, including by training women on sustainable agricultural production.

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Ministerial round tables: good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care

Chairs' summary

1. On 12 March 2018, the Commission on the Status of Women held two ministerial round tables on the topic "Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care" under the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". The participants in the round tables exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on existing national policy and legislative frameworks and on measures that have delivered concrete results for rural women and girls. They referred to challenges that lie ahead in preventing and responding to gender-based violence against rural women and girls at the national level.

2. The Presidential Councillor for Gender Equality of Colombia, Martha Ordoñez, chaired the first round table and made introductory comments. Ministers and high-level government officials from 18 Member States participated in the first round table. The Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, summarized key messages of the discussion. The Minister for Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs of Qatar, Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi, chaired the second round table and made introductory comments. Ministers and high-level government officials from 19 Member States

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participated in the second round table. The Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Natalia Kanem, made closing remarks.

Importance of national policy and legislative frameworks as measures to prevent gender-based violence and to ensure effective responses for women and girl survivors

3. Participants discussed the implementation of national strategies and action plans to address different forms of gender-based violence, many of which aim at ensuring access to such comprehensive services as justice, social services and health care, including in rural areas. They outlined their efforts at enhancing coordination across institutions to ensure that all relevant authorities are involved in implementing holistic assistance strategies. Coordinated action between health service providers and judicial authorities were presented as especially important in this regard, and it was underlined that civil society and women's organizations played an essential role in the enhanced delivery of assistance to victims and survivors. A few speakers also noted the role of the private sector.

4. Participants highlighted their efforts to strengthen national legal frameworks so as to align them with international standards, including the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Enhancing the protection of women and girls requires laws on specific forms of violence, such as femicide, sexual offences and sexual harassment in public spaces. In order to create better awareness of relevant legislation among the general population and service providers, such laws needed to be widely disseminated and to be made available in local languages. Other steps and good practices towards the elimination of gender-based violence included laws and policies to strengthen women's political participation, to ensure women's land rights and security of tenure and to reduce the gender wage gap. Institutional arrangements should include the establishment of national human rights bodies.

Measures to provide comprehensive services for women and girls

5. Ministers described the availability of comprehensive services for women and girls affected by gender-based violence. Those included one-stop centres and shelters, counselling and psychosocial assistance, adequate health-care services, including for sexual and reproductive health and maternal health, and the extension of coverage to rural areas.

6. Participants affirmed that improving access to justice was critical to the effective reduction of violence against women and girls. The use of hotlines to report violence against women and girls and seek assistance and counselling, the training of police and judges and the strengthening of law enforcement in rural areas were presented as good practices that have closed the gap between victims and the justice system.

Measures to enhance the economic empowerment and financial autonomy of rural women

7. Many participants underlined the importance of the economic empowerment of rural women, especially through ensuring women's economic and financial independence as a means to address gender-based violence.

8. Participants emphasized the importance of recognizing the work and contribution of women in agriculture. They gave examples of how their position in

the economy had been strengthened through access to land, infrastructure and financial services. Measures had been taken to support the economic empowerment of rural women, including through improved access to financial services such as the availability of mobile banking, microcredit and cash transfers for women in rural areas. Targeted efforts had been made to reach women in vulnerable situations and/or facing multiple forms of discrimination.

9. Progress was reported on increasing the rate of women's participation in the labour force and empowering rural women as entrepreneurs, through programmes that provide affordable and accessible childcare services and mentorship schemes.

Challenges in the protection and empowerment of rural women and girls

10. Although participants agreed that much progress had been made in empowering rural women and girls, speakers were concerned that gender-based violence, including political violence against women, was more prevalent among women and girls living in rural areas than among those living in urban areas. Their situation was further exacerbated by limited access to justice, social services and health care. In particular, attention was drawn to the needs of women with disabilities, young women, indigenous women, migrant women, older women, divorced women and women from minority groups, who face additional marginalization. The lack of adequate disaggregated data for rural areas also created challenges in designing effective measures to support the empowerment of women living in those areas and to eliminate the particular disadvantages faced by women in rural areas.

11. Participants recognized that some traditional and cultural beliefs were among the root causes of gender-based violence and constituted barriers for women in reporting such violence and accessing justice. Speakers noted that the challenges required context-specific solutions on issues such as domestic violence, child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The importance of engaging men and boys and of addressing negative masculinities was also discussed.

12. Situations of conflict and fragility were mentioned as specific challenges for access to health care, social services and economic opportunity for women and girls living in rural areas.

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High-level interactive dialogue among ministers on building alliances to achieve gender equality and empower rural women and girls

Chair's summary

1. On 13 March 2018, the Commission on the Status of Women held a high-level ministerial dialogue on building alliances to achieve gender equality and empower rural women and girls under the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". The participants in the high-level interactive dialogue exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic.

2. The Minister for Equality, Integration and Immigration of Ireland, David Stanton, chaired and moderated the high-level dialogue. The meeting opened with an introduction by the Chair. Ministers and high-level officials from 34 Member States and one observer exchanged good practices, modalities, ongoing and planned initiatives and efforts to build alliances and partnerships to promote gender equality. Nine representatives from non-governmental organizations contributed their perspectives. The dialogue concluded with closing comments by the Chair.

Challenges and opportunities for rural women and girls

3. Participants recognized rural women and girls as agents of change and pillars of rural communities, and highlighted the significant contributions of rural women to

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economic growth, rural development, sustainable agriculture, food security and environmental protection and sustainability.

4. Many participants drew attention to persistent challenges faced by women and girls in rural and remote areas, and the multiple forms of discrimination, as well as the violence and harmful practices, that they experienced. Their limited, or lack of, access to basic services, education, health care, land and productive assets, infrastructure, water and sanitation, financing, technology and other resources further exacerbated the marginalization and exclusion they faced. Rural women and girls also carried an unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work in their households. The work of rural women was predominantly in the informal sector and they had fewer opportunities than men to obtain decent work. The added challenges of armed conflict and humanitarian crises for rural women and girls and for rural development were also mentioned.

5. Participants highlighted initiatives and efforts undertaken to address those challenges, including legal and policy reforms, plans and programmes to promote the empowerment of rural women and girls and to tackle discrimination and violence, and gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. Access to justice and legal services for rural women and girls was another key area of intervention.

6. The importance of quality education and training opportunities for rural women and girls, including with regard to digital and financial literacy, was highlighted. Some speakers emphasized the role of technology for delivering training and services in rural areas and for fostering inclusion. New technologies and information and communications technologies allowed for flexible working hours and access to jobs and market opportunities for women in rural and remote areas.

7. The importance of promoting the empowerment of rural women, including through measures to enhance labour market participation, was stressed. Entrepreneurship opportunities for rural women were being enhanced, and support was being provided for networks of entrepreneurs and women's cooperatives. Access to markets and financing, credit, loans, insurance and banking were key elements in the empowerment of rural women. The need to recognize and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and to strengthen the role of rural women in decision-making within households was emphasized, as was the need to improve the health of rural women, including sexual and reproductive health, and family planning.

8. Participation and leadership by rural women, and by their organizations, in the development, implementation and monitoring of national legislation, policies and development plans and programmes were seen as crucial for sustainable development. Participants gave examples of the enhanced participation of rural women in decision-making processes at all levels, which sometimes had been achieved through quotas. Their participation in local representative bodies, such as local councils or municipalities, as well as in peace processes, was considered to be especially important.

Building alliances to achieve gender equality and empower rural women and girls

9. Many participants welcomed the role of alliances and partnerships between government and other stakeholders to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. Such alliances frequently included multiple stakeholders, such as national and local governments, civil society, trade unions, women's organizations and cooperatives, academia and the private sector. National mechanisms for gender equality played a crucial role in such efforts.

Collaboration between governments and civil society had resulted in important legal reforms and effective national policies and strategies.

10. Alliance building and broad-based collaboration had been effective in bringing about action in areas such as gender-based violence, food security, the economic empowerment of women, education, capacity-building and access to finance, land rights and tenure security, natural resources management and infrastructure development. Joint efforts had been deployed to address gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms and practices. The important role of men and boys in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas was also stressed.

11. Speakers emphasized the importance of enhanced coordination and coherence within government and across sectors for the benefit of rural women and girls, involving different ministries and offices of the public sector, such as those responsible for agriculture, finance, labour, education and health. Gender focal points and specialized units across government enabled and facilitated gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies and strategies.

12. Partnerships with universities, academia and research centres had contributed to expanded knowledge about the situation of women and girls in rural areas. Sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics enabled better policy and programme development, and supported accountability with regard to public efforts and actions. Some speakers gave examples of ongoing work among stakeholders to develop better indicators to capture the lives of rural women, while others called for increased efforts to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for rural women and girls.

13. Participants stressed the need to support and strengthen organizations for rural women with regard to efforts towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. The need to create safe and inclusive spaces for the voices and participation of rural women was mentioned, as was the need to support organizing and movement building among women for realizing rights. A need to invest in the leadership and voice of girls was identified. Concern was expressed about the shrinking space for civil society.

14. Alliances among stakeholders had contributed to enhanced implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for rural women and girls. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals provided a critical impetus for building alliances and partnerships to help realize the rights of rural women and girls. Regional efforts also played an important role in supporting rural women and girls, as did international and regional organizations. Development cooperation contributed to enhancing the situation of rural women and girls.

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High-level interactive dialogue: accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieving concrete results by 2020

Chair's summary

1. On 13 March 2018, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on the topic "Accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieving concrete results by 2020".

2. The Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Koki Muli Grignon, chaired and moderated the dialogue and made an introductory statement and closing remarks. Ministers and high-level government officials from 22 Member States and 11 invited speakers, representing diverse stakeholder groups, participated in the dialogue.

Policy measures to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

3. Participants stressed their commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outlined action taken and investments made, or planned, to achieve concrete results by the year 2020, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Governments demonstrating leadership, prioritizing action for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and strengthening collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders to eliminate the discrimination and inequality faced by women

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and girls had resulted in accelerated progress. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals had contributed to momentum for action in support of women and girls.

4. Participants outlined laws, policies, national strategies and action plans that are being leveraged and developed to accelerate the implementation of gender equality commitments. Such measures included steps to integrate a gender perspective in policies and programmes, including fiscal, employment and poverty reduction strategies. Examples of comprehensive national gender equality strategies, of gender-sensitive services and of measures to reduce barriers to women's economic and political participation were presented. Investments in areas such as housing, childcare and skills development for women were discussed. Many examples of efforts to end violence against women were highlighted, including in reference to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Speakers underscored the particular challenges facing women in conflict situations and highlighted commitments with respect to peace and security.

5. Speakers gave indications of progress, for example as measured by the growing number of women in political leadership positions, the percentage of national budgets allocated to gender equality and women's rate of participation in the labour force. Collecting sex-disaggregated data and practising gender-responsive budgeting were seen as important means of ensuring accountability and fostering the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

6. Participants confirmed that working with a wide range of stakeholders, including grass-roots organizations, was a key component in successful implementation strategies. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and working across sectors were also mentioned, as were strategic partnerships between different government agencies and among different actors at the national and regional levels. Several speakers called for further engagement with young women and girls and with youth. Engaging men and boys and fostering positive masculinities and a culture of gender equality were key strategies for accelerating concrete results for gender equality, including in the areas of health and education.

7. In the context of the priority theme of the sixty-second session of the Commission, speakers presented their policy priorities in areas such as gender-responsive climate change action, women in agriculture, and rural sanitation, as well as sexual and reproductive health and family planning. The importance of addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls living in rural areas was also mentioned as a priority.

Contributions by stakeholders to accelerate implementation

8. Representatives from various stakeholder groups highlighted concrete action they have taken and will take to accelerate momentum and achieve concrete results by 2020 in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9. International and regional organizations played an important role in tracking progress in the implementation of global and regional gender equality commitments. Work by regional organizations to collect and analyse data had prompted regional policy responses, as reflected in regional conventions and protocols. Enhancing the collaboration between regional organizations, through the sharing of knowledge,

information and good practices, was considered an important means to accelerate implementation.

10. Speakers noted that national human rights institutions played a vital role in the promotion of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, given their independent status and expertise and their direct knowledge of the human rights situation in national contexts. Such institutions can leverage their mandates to support the accelerated implementation of gender equality commitments, by monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and promoting a human rights-based approach in the implementation of national development strategies. The participation of national human rights institutions in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women can contribute to further accelerating implementation.

11. Human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and mechanisms contribute to the implementation of commitments within their areas of expertise and mandate. Thematic reports prepared by the special procedures, such as the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, support the work of the Human Rights Council in its role of strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. Speakers also emphasized that the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of special procedures mandate holders, such as the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on violence against women, its causes and consequences, add impetus to the implementation of such commitments.

12. Participants highlighted the important role of the United Nations system, and in particular of the Rome-based agencies, in supporting Member States in efforts to empower rural women and girls, including by supporting the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. Implementation of the gender action plan under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa will enhance a gender-responsive approach to such issues as land degradation.

13. Speakers further stressed that gender perspectives must be integrated into the work of the entire system and in this regard, they called on the United Nations system to work more collaboratively, across the three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, to achieve concrete results by 2020. In this regard, participants highlighted that enhanced interaction among intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system, especially the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, can support accelerated implementation through the formulation of coordinated responses to persistent gaps and challenges in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

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Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

Chair's summary

1. On 14 and 15 March 2018, in a series of interactive dialogues, the Commission on the Status of Women evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the priority theme of its forty-seventh session, namely, the participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (see E/CN.6/2018/4). The Vice-Chairs of the Commission, Rena Tasuja (Estonia) and Mauricio Carabali Baquero (Colombia), chaired the interactive dialogues.

2. As part of the review, the following 13 Member States presented information, on a voluntary basis, on trends and challenges faced and actions and initiatives undertaken to address the challenges faced by women and girls in the media and the digital age: Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Sri Lanka and the Sudan. The presentations were followed by responses and comments from Member States and others that had partnered with those mentioned above. Those partners, respectively, included Paraguay, Brazil and Mexico, the International Organization of la Francophonie, Tunisia and Denmark, Italy and Armenia, Norway and Mexico, El Salvador, Morocco and Panama, Namibia and China, Rwanda and South Africa, Australia, Canada, Lebanon, and Samoa, Morocco and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Bahrain and Singapore, the Netherlands and Brazil, Nepal and Indonesia, and Morocco, Ethiopia, El Salvador and Panama.

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3. The Director of the Intergovernmental Support Division of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Christine Brautigam, presented the report of the Secretary-General on the review theme, which drew on inputs from 34 Member States and other information. The report identified measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights in the digital age, including by enhancing policy coherence and aligning the implementation of national sustainable development, information and communications technology (ICT) and gender equality strategies, action plans and resource allocation; improving girls' and women's access to and use of ICT to close the gender digital divide; and strengthening the evidence base.

4. All presenting countries acknowledged that the digital age had and continued to rapidly transform many aspects of economic, social and political life. That included the creation of content, access to and dissemination of information, and ways of working and interacting, with broad implications for education and learning, access to services such as health care, forms of work and employment in fields such as commerce and finance. In many of the presenting countries, the integration of gender perspectives in national ICT strategies and policies, including many e-government initiatives, provided a solid basis for action to enhance opportunities and actively respond to challenges that women and girls encountered in the digital age.

5. At the same time, the digital age and the widespread use of ICT, including online media, also posed challenges relating to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and negative social norms and created new threats to girls' and women's safety and privacy. Those could range from cyberviolence, sexual harassment and intimidation to portrayals of women and girls that perpetuated gender inequalities, including with respect to physical attributes, roles and expectations, professions and activities.

6. Several of the presenting countries highlighted the persistence or even widening of a gender digital divide, reflected in the lower rate of enrolment and retention of girls and women, compared with boys and men, in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in computer science education in particular. A similar trend was observed in the media sector, where women journalists remained often vastly outnumbered by men journalists and the representation of women in top positions, including as editors, had declined, sometimes dramatically. In Belgium, that had been demonstrated through studies and research and, as a consequence, a journalists' association had developed a tool called "Expertalia" to facilitate the diversification of sources that favoured equality and diversity.

7. Countries reported on their efforts to address online gender stereotypes and digital harm. The "Because I Say No" campaign in Slovakia was aimed at increasing awareness about sexual violence, but had also resulted in a decrease in the public's tolerance of sexual violence and improved women's capacity to respond to such violence. New Zealand had conducted a study on the gendered nature of digital harm, which had shed light on young people's online lives. The gender-specific findings had clearly demonstrated the need to empower young people through education and awareness-raising on how to be safe online and by involving young women in particular in developing digital tools.

8. To address gender stereotypes, Germany had launched its "Discover Football" initiative, aimed at promoting diversity and successes of women athletes to counter the association of sports with men and enhance the popularity of sports among women and girls. Argentina and Costa Rica reported on the use of legal and regulatory frameworks to address digital harm, including information laws, regulations and national observatories to prevent and monitor symbolic violence, hate speech and harassment in the media. Kenya had used hack technology to tackle gender-based

violence, including to map such violence, gather data and provide survivors with access to essential information and support.

9. Many presentations demonstrated how ICT technologies had broadened economic opportunities and access to services, with particular achievements for women, including those living in rural areas and women with disabilities. The "E-Wallet" agricultural scheme in Nigeria had enabled women to gain direct access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and agrochemicals without middlemen, affording them larger profit margins. The Gezira family medicine project in the Sudan had provided accessible and affordable primary health care in rural areas, where medical facilities used ICTs for online interaction between medical personnel to overcome geographical barriers, including through medical display devices, webcams and telemedicine software. The success of the M-Pesa mobile money platform of Kenya had provided financial access to millions of women and girls who had been left out of the traditional banking sector. A total of 9 out of 10 Kenyans now accessed financial services through M-Pesa. In Costa Rica, local radio stations in remote locations had helped to increase awareness among women and girls in the rural areas of their rights. Colombia had promoted the access, use and ownership of ICTs among women with disabilities and women caregivers. Argentina had placed emphasis on the inclusion of women in its digital transformation, to enhance their participation in the economy and entrepreneurship, and in accessing markets.

10. Policies, strategies and specific programmes had been aimed at improving women's and girls' participation in ICT and their information technology (IT) literacy. Sri Lanka, for example, had reported sustained improvements in IT literacy among women and girls as a result of the implementation of the "e-Sri Lanka" programme. A key component was to increase the empowerment of women and young people through increased and affordable access to ICT tools and multilingual Internet materials. A component of the ICT strategy of Saudi Arabia was to encourage the entry of girls and women into the ICT sector by providing scholarships and incentives such as subsidized social security for employers to hire women ICT specialists. The digital citizenship programme in Colombia focused on, among other areas, digital literacy, communications, trade, security and law and had demonstrated beneficial impacts for women and girls. Bulgaria's programme to enhance the participation of women in the digital sector was aimed at enhancing work-life balance by combining training, skills upgrades and digital literacy with measures to support women's careers in the ICT field through child-care services and other types of support. Nigeria had in place a number of applications and awards, including the GEM-TECH awards, to draw women into the ICT field.

11. A number of presentations demonstrated ways to increase the representation of women in the media. In Germany, efforts towards achieving gender balance in the media and ICT sectors included the use of quotas. Belgium and Slovakia used rosters and databases of women with expertise in different fields, including in journalism, ICT and banking, as an important resource for employers to broaden pools of candidates, as well as for advocacy to achieve greater representation and expand networks of advocates and experts.

12. Presenters agreed that comprehensive partnerships among government, civil society organizations, the media and the private sector, including public-private partnerships, were a key strategy for enhancing women's and girls' access to and use of ICT. In Costa Rica, public-private partnerships had enabled the expansion of government programmes to encourage the participation of young women in ICT fields through formal and non-formal education. Such partnerships had helped to expand broadband availability in rural and remote areas and had enabled better access to online information, for example for women farmers.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

Interactive expert panel on the role of rural women's land rights and land tenure security in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals

Chair's summary

1. On 16 March 2018, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on the topic "The role of rural women's land rights and land tenure security in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals". The participants in the expert panel exchanged views, experiences and insights on the topic with an emphasis on results achieved, strengthening dialogue and commitment for further action. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Shah Asif Rahman (Bangladesh), moderated the discussion.

2. The members of the expert panel were: senior legal adviser on gender for the International Development Law Organization, Rea Abada Chiongson; member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Naela Gabr; coordinator of education and culture at the Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity from Latin America and the Caribbean, Yolanda Terán Maigua; board member of the International Action Network for Gender Equity and Law, Tzili Mor; and head of the Global Urban Observatory at the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Robert P. Ndugwa. Representatives of eight Member States and four civil society organizations engaged in the discussion with the panel members.

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Context

3. Rural women's land rights and land tenure security are inextricably linked with sustainable development, contributing to women's economic empowerment, deterring gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. Rural land in many countries is held under customary and communal systems but around 2.5 billion people, including 370 million indigenous people, lack legally recognized rights. In many rural areas, women hold less than 20 per cent of agricultural land.

4. Global normative frameworks provide a strong basis for addressing challenges faced by rural women in the enjoyment of their land rights. In particular, the rights of rural women are protected under article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Their rights are also enshrined in other instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

5. Securing the rights of women to land is instrumental in reducing poverty and enhancing productivity, food security and the health of communities. It also contributes to conservation efforts, the protection of biodiversity and mitigation of the impact of climate change. Land rights for women correlate with several of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as those on education, decent work, climate change and ending hunger. Several indicators for Goals 1 and 5, in particular indicators 1.4.2, 5.A.1 and 5.A.2, are designed to monitor progress on securing women's land rights.

6. Protection of the rights of rural women and girls, stronger institutions, the participation and leadership of women and awareness-raising are needed to address persistent systemic barriers that stand in the way of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Gender perspectives on land rights and land tenure security

7. Land is traditionally owned through inheritance and marriage and correlates with power and identity. Statutory law and customary land systems sometimes coexist, creating challenges for women in securing their land rights. Disregard for customary systems may prevent women from gaining access to collectively held land, thereby curtailing customary protection of women's land rights.

8. Collaborative land ownership and land-holding systems are important pathways for rural women to acquire formal land rights. Women must have full and informed knowledge of their rights under statutory and customary systems and engage and participate in decision-making to uphold their rights in formal and informal land systems.

9. The commercialization of land through large-scale public and private investments affects the livelihoods of rural women and needs to be addressed. Governments need to hold multinational corporations accountable where their activities affect the enjoyment of land rights by women living in rural areas. Other challenges to women's land rights, such as environmental degradation, conflict, macroeconomic policies and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination also need to be addressed.

10. The implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies on women's land rights and land tenure security needs to be enhanced and gender-based discrimination in laws, policies and programmes eliminated. Education on human rights, access to justice and effective remedies are needed to fully empower women to claim their land

rights. Capacity-building and training must also target decision makers in government and traditional structures to protect and uphold women's rights to land and land tenure security.

11. Data on rural women's land rights are scarce. The indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals have created momentum for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, disaggregated by sex and other factors. Opportunities exist for greater collaboration between Governments and other stakeholders, in particular civil society organizations and development partners, to strengthen data collection and use, as well as to undertake qualitative research on women's land ownership and use and their impact on the empowerment of women and their enjoyment of other rights.

The way forward

12. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a strong framework for a comprehensive approach to realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls living in rural areas. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda should therefore include targeted measures for the benefit of such women and girls, with particular focus on ensuring their land rights and land tenure security.

13. Policy advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building measures should include a focus on women's land rights. Governments should review and strengthen national legal frameworks, especially where plural legal systems exist, and revise discriminatory laws. Governments should also ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies on land, in support of the rights, needs and priorities of women living in rural areas.

14. Civil society organizations play a prominent role in raising awareness on women's land rights, challenging negative social norms and gender stereotypes, advocating the implementation of non-discriminatory customary and statutory laws and demanding accountability. Community leaders have a distinct role to play in helping to eliminate discriminatory practices with regard to women owning or inheriting land and property and deciding on related matters.